

## Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 078571  
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SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 078571

SECRET STATE 078571

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 529 - MARCH 27, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING  
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY

OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL. BEGIN'S GOVERNMENT COLLEAGUES AND OTHER SUPPORTERS SEEM TO BE RALLYING BEHIND HIM IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DIFFICULT BEGIN-CARTER TALKS. A CABINET STATEMENT FOLLOWING A FIVE-HOUR SESSION YESTERDAY SAID THAT THE MINISTERS HAD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BEGIN'S HANDLING OF HIS US DISCUSSIONS AND HAD REAFFIRMED THEIR BACKING FOR BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS AS "A FAIR BASIS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT."

2. SEVERAL INTERTWINED FACTORS SEEM TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE COALESCING OF SUPPORT FOR BEGIN WITHIN HIS OWN LIKUD COALITION:

(A) THE PERCEIVED NEED TO FIRMLY SIGNAL A UNITED GOVERNMENT FRONT IN THE FACE OF WHAT IS SEEN AS A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS;

(B) WEIZMAN'S CALL FOR A "NATIONAL PEACE GOVERNMENT," WHICH HAS BEEN REGARDED AS AN ILL-CONCEIVED AND ILL-TIMED MOVE ON HIS PART;

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 078571

(C) MOUNTING CRITICISM FROM THE OPPOSITION LABOR ALIGNMENT; AND

(D) PRESS ALLEGATIONS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE US BELIEVED BEGIN SHOULD BE REPLACED AS PRIME MINISTER.

3. MANY ISRAELIS FEEL THAT THE US IS BEING UNREASONABLE IN ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL. AS THE JERUSALEM POST EDITORIALIZED, "THE AMERICAN DEMANDS FOR A SETTLEMENT ARE LARGELY UNACCEPTABLE. MR. BEGIN DESERVES THE NATION'S WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT FOR RESISTING THOSE DEMANDS." A PARTICULAR CONCERN IS THAT THE US IS SEEN AS, IN EFFECT, ASKING ISRAEL TO MAKE CONSIDERABLE CONCESSIONS ON KEY ISSUES--SUCH AS WITHDRAWAL--IN WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE EARLY STAGES OF NEGOTIATIONS. ISRAEL'S VITAL SECURITY NEEDS ARE SEEN AS BEING AT STAKE, AND SEVERAL PAPERS ARGUE THAT SUCH NEEDS MUST BE DEFENDED IN THE FACE OF US PRESSURE.

4. THE ALLEGATIONS OF A US DESIRE TO BE RID OF BEGIN HAVE HEIGHTENED THE DEFENSIVE REACTION IN FAVOR OF BEGIN. IN THE MOOD OF THE MOMENT, MANY BELIEVE THE ALLEGATIONS TO BE TRUE, AND HAVE SAID THAT THE DULY-ELECTED BEGIN SHOULD BE BACKED IN THE FACE OF SUCH US TAMPERING. (ONE MAPAM KNESSET MEMBER, HOWEVER, CALLED YESTERDAY FOR A SPECIAL SESSION ON THE MATTER, SAYING THAT HIS PERSONAL INVESTI-

GATION HAD REVEALED THAT THE ALLEGATIONS HAD BEEN PLANTED BY A CABINET MEMBER.)

5. EMBASSY TEL AVIV SAID THAT WEIZMAN APPARENTLY DECIDED TO CHALLENGE BEGIN WITH THE CALL FOR A "NATIONAL PEACE GOVERNMENT" AT THIS TIME BECAUSE HE BELIEVED BEGIN IS SLIPPING IN THE PUBLIC'S ESTIMATION WHILE HE IS RECEIVING FAVORABLE NOTICES BECAUSE OF LEBANON. AMONG THE OPTIONS OPEN TO BEGIN, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES HE WILL CHOOSE TO  
SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 078571

RESPOND TO WEIZMAN'S CHALLENGE BY ASSOCIATING HIMSELF WITH THE CALL FOR A BROADER COALITION, NOTING HIS OWN PREVIOUS CALLS FOR SUCH A GOVERNMENT. THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT BEGIN WILL PROBABLY WEATHER WEIZMAN'S MOVE IN THE SHORT TERM, BUT HIS GOVERNMENT'S CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL OVER THE LONGER HAUL ARE LESS CERTAIN.

6. WEIZMAN'S MOVE FOR A NATIONAL PEACE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO GARNER ANY REAL SUPPORT, EVEN AMONG THE OPPOSITION, AND SEEMS LARGELY TO HAVE BACKFIRED INTO GREATER COALITION SUPPORT, AT LEAST COSMETICALLY, FOR BEGIN. WEIZMAN LACKS THE CONSTITUENCY WITHIN THE LIKUD FOR SUCH A CHALLENGE TO BEGIN, AND HIS ACTION HAS BEEN REGARDED AS A REVERSION TO HIS OLD IMPETUOUS BEHAVIOUR. MOREOVER, THOSE WITHIN THE COALITION WHO HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF BEGIN'S APPROACH AND SYMPATHETIC TOWARD WEIZMAN, WHEN FACED ESSENTIALLY WITH JOINING A "PALACE REVOLT" OR SIDING WITH BEGIN, SEEM TO HAVE CHOSEN THE LATTER COURSE. AS ONE LIBERAL PARTY MEMBER OBSERVED TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV, ALL SIDES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT PREFER TO BIDE THEIR TIME FOR NOW. THE CURRENT STRAIN IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS SEEMS TO HAVE REINFORCED THE BELIEF THAT IT IS NOT A PROPITIOUS TIME TO CHALLENGE BEGIN.

7. BEGIN'S SUPPORT, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO FOLLOW PARTY LINES. THE OPPOSITION, RATHER THAN RALLY BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT DURING THIS CRISIS IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, HAS INSTEAD STEPPED UP ITS CRITICISM OF BEGIN AND HIS POLICIES. THE LABOR ALIGNMENT HAS SAID THAT IT INTENDS TO CALL FOR A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT THIS WEEK; MAPAM HAS DECLARED THAT BEGIN SHOULD RESIGN, ACCORDING TO ALHAMISHMAR; AND LABOR PARTY HEAD PERES WAS CITED BY IDF RADIO AS SAYING YESTERDAY THAT BEGIN IS INCAPABLE OF  
SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 078571

CONDUCTING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

8. THE DMC APPEARS TO BE FACING SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS OVER THE ISSUE. ACCORDING TO A DMC MEMBER OF THE KNESSET,

HALF OF THE KNESSET FACTION WILL PROPOSE THIS WEEK THAT THE DMC LEAVE THE COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, MANY STILL BELIEVE THEY ARE MORE EFFECTIVE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. (CONFIDENTIAL)

9. EGYPT. EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS ARE PLEASED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S FIRMNESS ON KEY ISSUES AND HIS REFUSAL TO BE DIVERTED BY EVENTS IN LEBANON. THEY ARE SOMBER AND APPREHENSIVE, HOWEVER, OVER THE FUTURE AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO RESTORE MOMENTUM TO THE PEACE PROCESS.

10. EGYPT'S PRESS HAS EMPHASIZED THE CONFRONTATIONAL ASPECT OF BEGIN'S VISIT TO THE US. THE TALKS WERE DESCRIBED AS THE TOUGHEST EVER IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, WHICH ARE NOW IN "CRISIS." PRESIDENT SADAT WILL ARGUE WITH OTHER ARABS THAT THE EROSION IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS IS THE PRODUCT OF HIS INITIATIVE.

11. SADAT WILL WATCH CLOSELY FOR INCREASED OPPOSITION TO BEGIN'S POLICIES WITHIN ISRAEL. HE APPEARS TO BE BANKING HEAVILY THAT DOMESTIC PRESSURE WILL FORCE BEGIN TO ALTER HIS STANCE, OR EVEN TO LEAVE OFFICE. SADAT SEES THE "EXPIRATION" OF THE SINAI II AGREEMENT IN OCTOBER AS A DEADLINE FOR HIS INITIATIVE TO SUCCEED. HE WILL USE THE INTERVENING TIME TO PREPARE PUBLIC OPINION FOR ANY POLICY SHIFT THAT MIGHT BE REQUIRED.

12. EMBASSY CAIRO OBSERVED THAT SEVERAL THEMES HAVE EMERGED IN THE REACTIONS OF VARIOUS EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS TO THE BEGIN-CARTER TALKS:

(A) THE VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS OPINION THAT BEGIN IS  
SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 078571

INCAPABLE OF CHANGING OR SEIZING THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY, AND THUS SHOULD BE COUNTED OUT AS A PEACEMAKER;

(B) RELIEF THAT PRESIDENT CARTER DID NOT BACK AWAY FROM PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITIONS;

(C) SATISFACTION THAT A PUBLIC US-ISRAEL CONFRONTATION IS TAKING PLACE;

(D) SKEPTICISM THAT THE US IS DOING ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY INFLUENCE ISRAEL, GIVEN ISRAEL'S DEPENDENCE ON THE US; AND

(E) RESIGNATION THAT EGYPT, DESPITE ITS PRESENT STAKE IN THE PEACE PROCESS, HAS LITTLE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS AT THIS TIME.

13. MEANWHILE, SADAT MET WITH HIS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL LAST SATURDAY AMID GROWING DOMESTIC PRESSURE FOR A SHIFT IN EGYPTIAN FOREIGN POLICY. AFTER THE MEETING FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL ASSERTED THAT EGYPT WOULD CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR PEACE, BASED ON ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB TERRITORY, RECOGNITION OF THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, AND MUTUAL SECURITY GUARANTEES.

4. PRIOR TO THE SESSION TWO NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS BY SADAT SUPPORTERS INDICATED GROWING EGYPTIAN CONCERN ABOUT CAIRO'S ISOLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD. WHILE THESE SADAT SUPPORTERS DID NOT URGE THE PRESIDENT TO ABANDON HIS INITIATIVE, THEY NOTED ITS NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ARAB UNITY. FURTHERMORE, SOME OF SADAT'S CLOSEST FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORS, INCLUDING KAMEL AND MINISTER OF STATE GHALI, ARE SECRET

PAGE 07 STATE 078571

KNOWN TO BE DISTRESSED BY THE CLEVERAGE IN ARAB RANKS AND

WOULD LIKE TO SEE EGYPT MORE IN TUNE WITH THE OTHER ARAB STATES.

15. (EMBASSY DAMASCUS OBSERVED THAT A MARCH 20 TISHRIIN EDITORIAL SURPRISINGLY ADMITTED INDIRECTLY SADAT'S INITIATIVE HAD BEEN "A HISTORIC CHANCE" FOR PEACE. A TISHRIIN DEPUTY EDITOR CONFIRMED TO THE EMBASSY THAT THIS INTERPRETATION WAS CORRECT. THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT ASSAD MAY BE PREPARING THE GROUND FOR AN HONORABLE RECONCILIATION, RETROACTIVELY SEEMINGLY APPROVING SADAT'S INITIATIVE NOW THAT IT APPEARS TO HAVE FAILED. SADAT, FOR HIS PART, WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ASSAD IN AN OCTOBER MAGAZINE INTERVIEW PUBLISHED THIS WEEKEND, ASSERTING THAT THE LATTER HAD COLLUDED WITH ISRAEL IN THE INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON. SADAT ALSO IMPLICITLY QUESTIONED ASSAD'S CREDENTIALS AS SYRIAN LEADER, CHARGING THAT HE WAS AN ALAWITE FIRST AND A BAATHI SECOND, AND ONLY THIRDLY SYRIAN.)

16. EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTS THAT THESE TWO EDITORIALS HAVE AROUSED PARTICULAR INTEREST AMONG INFORMED EGYPTIANS BECAUSE OF THE PROMINENCE OF THE NEWSMEN AS SADAT PARTISANS. CONCERN ABOUT EGYPT'S ALIENATION FROM MUCH OF THE ARAB WORLD HAS BEEN A FAVORITE THEME OF LEFTISTS, NASSERISTS, AND OTHER SADAT CRITICS SINCE BEFORE SINAI II. BUT THIS ATTITUDE HAS SPREAD ONLY RECENTLY TO SADAT'S CAMP BECAUSE OF THE STALLING OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE UPSURGE OF ARABISM FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON.

17. THE EGYPTIANS, MOREOVER, HAVE BEEN EMBARRASSED BY RECENT ISRAELI STATEMENTS THAT THE PLO IS THE "COMMON ENEMY" OF EGYPT AND ISRAEL AND THAT THE RECENT CYCLE OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD NOT

HINDER EGYPT-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. THE ISRAELIS MAY  
SECRET

PAGE 08 STATE 078571

INTEND SUCH STATEMENTS TO REASSURE EGYPT THAT NEGOTIATIONS CAN CONTINUE, BUT THIS THEME CAUSES MUCH DISCOMFORT IN CAIRO AND INDIRECTLY SUGGESTS TO OTHER ARABS THAT EGYPT SOMEHOW ACQUIESCED IN THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON. FURTHER, THEY SUGGEST THAT EGYPT IS WILLING TO SACRIFICE ARAB INTERESTS FOR A BILATERAL PEACE.

18. THE PERCEPTIONS IN EGYPT THAT BEGIN'S WASHINGTON VISIT WAS A FAILURE IS HAVING A MIXED IMPACT ON EGYPTIAN ATTITUDES. AL-AHRAM NOTED THAT DESCRIBING US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AS "COOL" OR "FROSTY" WAS NOT SUFFICIENT; THE US, IT SAID, MUST ACT. THE NEWSPAPER ALSO SUGGESTED THAT A DEADLINE FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE PEACE PROCESS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED--NOT LATER THAN NEXT SEPTEMBER. AS A

PREPARATION FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT PEACE WOULD NOT BE ACHIEVED BY THEN, THE NEWSPAPER ADVOCATED THAT SADAT BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.

19. OTHER EGYPTIANS, HOWEVER, APPEARED TO BE BUOYED BY THEIR IMPRESSION OF THIS WEEK'S EVENTS IN WASHINGTON. MANY HAVE NOTED THAT FOR "THE FIRST TIME IN THIRTY YEARS A US PRESIDENT SUPPORTED BY CONGRESS HAS REALLY REPRI-MANDED ISRAEL." THE EGYPTIANS ARE ALSO TAKING ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CURRENT POLITICAL TURMOIL IN ISRAEL. SOME VIEW WEIZMAN'S CALL FOR A "PEACE GOVERNMENT" AS POSSIBLY THE LONG-AWAITED BEGINNING OF ISRAEL'S SERIOUS SEARCH FOR PEACE. THIS PERCEPTION, HOWEVER, WAS TEMPERED BY A SENSE OF DESPONDENCY THAT BEGIN HAD NOT BUDGED AND AS EMBASSY CAIRO OBSERVED, A GROWING FEELING THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE WILL BE SLIM AS LONG AS BEGIN REMAINS IN OFFICE.  
(CONFIDENTIAL)

SECRET

PAGE 09 STATE 078571

20. LEBANON. THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON CONTINUES TO HOLD DESPITE SEVERAL INCIDENTS OF SPORADIC FIRING. ISRAELI POSITIONS IN THE EASTERN SECTOR OF SOUTHERN LEBANON WERE SHELLED ON MARCH 24 AND 25 AFTER THE PALESTINIAN STRONGHOLD OF NABATIYAH WAS ALLEGEDLY STRUCK BY ROCKET AND ARTILLERY LATE ON THE 24TH. ISRAELI SOURCES DENY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVOKING THE PALESTINIANS. ADDITIONALLY, PALESTINIAN ROCKETS AND ARTILLERY WERE ALSO NOTED STRIKING TOWNS IN THE NORTHERN HULA VALLEY AND NORTHERN GALILEE ON THE 24TH AND 25TH; NO ISRAELI RETALIATION WAS NOTED.

21. AMIDST AN APPARENT DRAWDOWN IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, ISRAEL NOW FACES THE DILEMMA OF OBSERVING ITS SELF-IMPOSED CEASE-FIRE WHILE PALESTINIAN ROCKET AND ARTILLERY ROUNDS HIT NORTHERN ISRAEL. IT IS UNCLEAR HOW ISRAELI OFFICIALS WILL TRY TO RESOLVE THIS SERIOUS AND INDEED PERPLEXING PROBLEM. AT THIS TIME, THERE APPEARS TO BE THREE OPTIONS AVAILABLE, NONE HAVING MUCH PROMISE. FOR EXAMPLE, LIMITED REPRISAL STRIKES ON TYRE AND ELSEWHERE NORTH OF THE LITANI RIVER WOULD NOW BE COMPLICATED BY UNIFIL'S PRESENCE AND WOULD BE ORDERED BY ISRAELI OFFICIALS ONLY AS A LAST RESORT. SECONDLY, ALLOWING SYRIAN ARAB DETERRENT FORCES (ADF) UNITS AS FAR SOUTH AS THE LITANI RIVER IS UNTENABLE SINCE IT WOULD REQUIRE ISRAEL TO NEGATE ITS PREVIOUS POSITION ON THE PROXIMITY OF SYRIAN FORCES TO THE NORTHERN ISRAELI BORDER. FINALLY, THE OPTION OF UNIFIL FORCES DEPLOYING NORTH OF THE LITANI RIVER IN THE NEAR FUTURE DOES NOT LOOK PROMISING. MOREOVER, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE UN IS PREPARED AT THIS TIME TO ENGAGE IN DIRECT CONFRONTA-

TIONS WITH PALESTINIAN FORCES TO SECURE AND SUPERVISE THE LAST OF THEIR STRONGHOLDS.

22. MEANWHILE THE SYRIANS APPEAR TO BE UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO LIFT THEIR BAN ON THE TRANSSHIPMENT OF MEN AND  
SECRET

PAGE 10 STATE 078571

SUPPLIES TO THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. IRAQI RADIO WAS PARTICULARLY HARSH. DAMASCUS RADIO HAS ATTEMPTED TO PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISION ON PRESIDENT SARKIS, AS COMMANDER OF THE ADF WHICH MUST ENFORCE THE DECISION. SUCH DENIALS OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE UNLIKELY TO BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE ALL REALIZE THE ADF IS A SYRIAN FORCE.

23. EMBASSY DAMASCUS REPORTED THAT ASSAD IS COMMITTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE UNIFIL OPERATION, BUT IS SUBJECT TO SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PRESSURES. IRAQ AND EGYPT HAVE PUT PROPAGANDA PRESSURE ON ASSAD TO GIVE MORE TANGIBLE SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIANS, AND LIBYA IS SAID TO BE APPLYING FINANCIAL PRESSURE. THESE EXTERNAL PRESSURES HAVE BEEN ECHOED IN INTERNAL COUNCILS, THE BAATH PARTY HAS CRITICIZED ASSAD'S LACK OF BACKING FOR THE PALESTINIANS AND HIS RELIANCE ON THE US TO ENSURE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON. (SECRET) VANCE

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